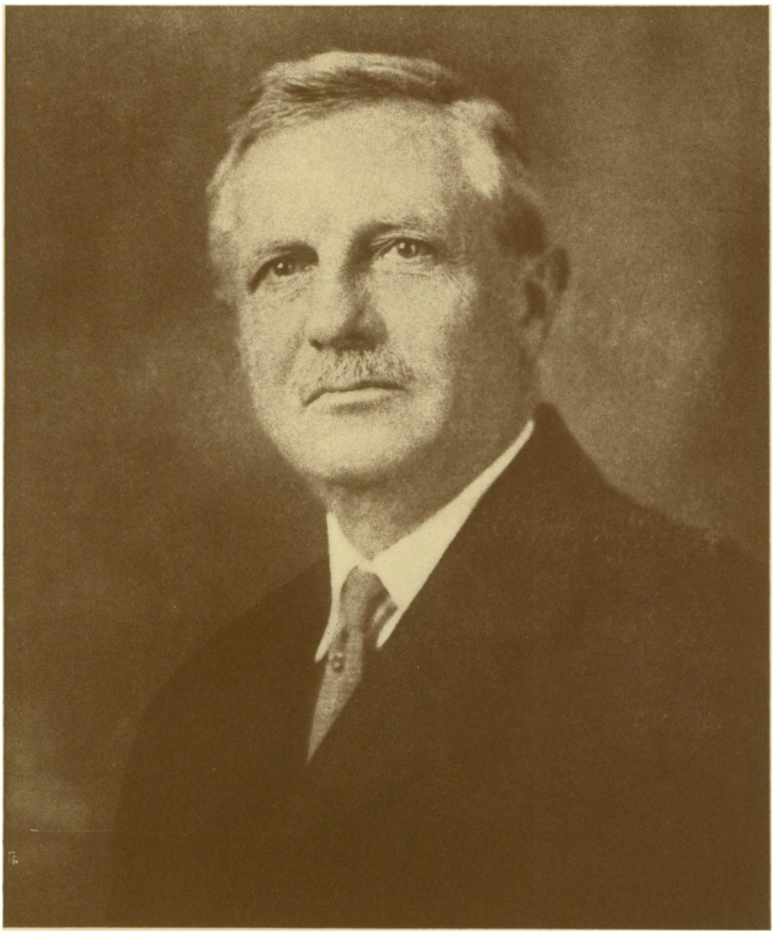

FREDERICK JACKSON TURNER

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SECTION IN AMERICAN HISTORY

FREDERICK JACKSON TURNER

A generation ago I published in the *Proceedings* of this Society a paper which I had read at the summer meeting of the American Historical Association, on "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." The Superintendent of the Census had just announced that a frontier line could no longer be traced, and had declared: "In the discussion of its extent, its westward movement, etc., it cannot therefore any longer have a place in the census reports."

The significance in American history of the advance of the frontier and of its disappearance is now generally recognized. This evening I wish to consider with you another fundamental factor in American history, namely, the Section. Arising from the facts of physical geography and the regional settlement of different peoples and types of society on the Atlantic coast there was a sectionalism from the beginning. But soon this became involved and modified by the fact that these societies were expanding into the interior, following the frontier, and that their sectionalism took special forms in the presence of the growing West. Today we are substantially a settled nation without the overwhelming influence that accompanied the westward spread of population. Urban concentration chiefly in the East has reversed the movement to a considerable extent. We are more like Europe, and our sections are becoming more and more the American version of the European nation.

First let us consider the influence of the frontier and the West upon American sections. Until our own day, as I urged in that paper, the United States was always beginning over on its outer edge as it advanced into the wilderness.

Therefore the United States was both a developed and a primitive society. The West was a migrating region, a stage of society rather than a place. Each region reached in the process of expansion from the coast had its frontier experience, was for a time "the West," and when the frontier passed on to new regions, it left behind in the older areas, memories, traditions, an inherited attitude toward life, that persisted long after the frontier had passed by. But while the influence of the frontier permeated East as well as West, by survival of the pioneer psychology and by the reaction of the Western ideals and life upon the East, it was in the newer regions, in the area called the West at any given time, that frontier traits and conceptions were most in evidence. This "West" was more than "the frontier" of popular speech. It included also the more populous transitional zone adjacent, which was still influenced by pioneer traditions and where economic society had more in common with the newer than with the older regions.

This "West" wherever found at different years thought of itself and of the nation in different ways from those of the East. It needed capital; it was a debtor region, while the East had the capital and was a creditor section. The West was rural, agricultural, while the East was becoming more and more urban and industrial. Living under conditions where the family was the self-sufficing economic unit, where the complications of more densely settled society did not exist, without accumulated inherited wealth, the frontier regions stressed the rights of man, while the statesmen who voiced the interests of the East stressed the rights of property.

The West believed in the rule of the majority, in what John Randolph, the representative of the Virginia tidewater aristocracy, called "King Numbers." The East feared an unchecked democracy, which might overturn minority rights, destroy established institutions, and attack vested

interests. The buoyant, optimistic, and sometimes reckless and extravagant spirit of innovation was the very life of the West. In the East innovation was a term of reproach. It always "stalked" like an evil spirit. The East represented accumulated experience, the traditions of the family living generation after generation in a single location and under a similar environment, as President Thwing, of Western Reserve University, has aptly put it. But out in the newer West through most of its history men lived in at least two or three states in the course of their migrations. Of the hundred and twenty-four members of the first Wisconsin constitutional convention in 1846, the average was three states for each member. Four had moved eight times. Sixteen had lived in five or more different states, or foreign countries and states; six had lived in seven or more.

The West demanded cheap or free lands on which to base a democratic farming population. The ruling interests in the East feared that such a policy would decrease land values at home and diminish the value of lands which its capitalists had purchased for speculation in the interior. It feared that cheap lands in the West would draw Eastern farmers into the wilderness; would break down the bonds of regular society; would prevent effective control of the discontented; would drain the labor supply away from the growing industrial towns, and thus raise wages.

The West opened a refuge from the rule of established classes, from the subordination of youth to age, from the sway of established and revered institutions. Writing in 1694 when the frontier lay at the borders of Boston Bay, the Reverend Cotton Mather asked: "Do our *Old* People any of them *Go Out* from the Institutions of God, swarming into New Settlements where they and their Untaught Families are like *to Perish for Lack of Vision?*" To their cost, he said, such men have "got unto the *Wrong side of the Hedge*" and "the Angel of the Lord becomes their enemy."

No doubt all this makes too sharply contrasted a picture. But from the beginning East and West have shown a sectional attitude. The interior of the colonies on the Atlantic was disrespectful of the coast, and the coast looked down upon the upland folk. The "Men of the Western World" when they crossed the Alleghanies became self-conscious and even rebellious against the rule of the East. In the thirties the tidewater aristocracy was conquered by the Jacksonian Democracy of the interior.

And so one could go on through the story of the anti-monopolists, the Grangers, the Populists, the Insurgents, the Progressives, the Farmers' Bloc, and the La Follette movement, to illustrate the persistence of the sectionalism of the West, or of considerable parts of it, against the East.

Perhaps Eastern apprehension was never more clearly stated than by Gouverneur Morris of Pennsylvania in the Constitutional Convention of 1787. "The busy haunts of men, not the remote wilderness," said he, are "the proper school of political talents. If the western people get the power into their hands they will ruin the Atlantic interests. The back members are always averse to the best measures." He would so fix the ratio of representation that the number of representatives from the Atlantic States should always be larger than the number from the Western States. This, he argued, would not be unjust "as the Western settlers would previously know the conditions on which they were to possess their lands." So influential was his argument that the convention struck out the provision in the draft which guaranteed equality with the old states to the states thereafter to be admitted to the Union. But on the motion that the representatives from new states should not exceed those from the Old Thirteen, the affirmative vote was cast by Massachusetts, Connecticut, Delaware, and Maryland; Pennsylvania was divided; and the motion was defeated by the votes of the Southern States plus New Jersey.

To the average American, to most American historians, and to most of the writers of our school textbooks (if one can trust the indexes to their books) the word *section* applies only to the struggle of South against North on the questions of slavery, state sovereignty, and, eventually, disunion.

But the Civil War was only the most drastic and most tragic of sectional manifestations, and in no small degree the form which it took depended upon the fact that rival societies, free and slave, were marching side by side into the unoccupied lands of the West, each attempting to dominate the back country, the hinterland, working out agreements from time to time, something like the diplomatic treaties of European nations, defining spheres of influence, and awarding mandates, such as in the Missouri Compromise, the Compromise of 1850, and the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Each Atlantic section was, in truth, engaged in a struggle for power; and power was to be gained by drawing upon the growing West. In the Virginia ratification convention of 1787 William Grayson, by no means the most radical of the members, said: "I look upon this as a contest for empire.... If the Mississippi be shut up, emigrations will be stopped entirely. There will be no new states formed on the Western Waters. . . . This contest of the Mississippi involves the great national contest; that is whether one part of this continent shall govern the other. The Northern States have the majority and will endeavor to retain it." Similar conceptions abound in the utterances of North Atlantic statesmen. "It has been said," declared Morris in 1787, "that North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia only, will in a little time have a majority of the people of America. They must in that case include the great interior country and everything is to be apprehended from their getting power into their hands."

If time permitted, it would be possible to illustrate by such utterances all through our history to very recent times

how the Eastern sections regarded the West with its advancing frontier as the raw material for power. To New England until her own children began to occupy the prairies ("reserved by God," as her pioneers declared, "for a pious and industrious people") this aspect of the West threatened to enable the South perpetually to rule the nation. The first great migration, the most extensive in the area covered, flowed into the interior from the Southern upland. Some of the extreme leaders of the New England Federalists did not so much desire to break away from the South as to deprive that section of the three-fifths representation for its slaves, and either to permit the Western States to leave the Union or to see them won by England. Then the Old Thirteen could be united under conditions which would check the expansion of the South and would leave New England in control.

Writing in 1786 Rufus King, of New York, later senator and minister to England, while admitting that it was impolitic at the time wholly to give up the Western settlers, declared that very few men who had examined the subject would refuse their assent "to the opinion that every Citizen of the Atlantic States, who emigrates to the westward of the Alleghany is a total loss to our confederacy."

"Nature," he said, "has severed the two countries by a vast and extensive chain of mountains, interest and convenience will keep them separate, and the feeble policy of our disjointed Government will not be able to unite them. For these reasons I have ever been opposed to encouragements of western emigrants. The States situated on the Atlantic are not sufficiently populous, and losing our men is losing our greatest source of wealth."

Of course the immediate complaint in New England and New York was against the South itself, its Jeffersonian principles, so antagonistic to New England Puritanism; its slavery, its pro-French sympathies. But all these gained

much of their force by the conviction that the West was a reservoir from which the South would continue to draw its power. Among the proposals of the Hartford Convention was that no new state should be admitted into the Union without the concurrence of two-thirds of both houses of Congress. The report warned the old states against "an overwhelming Western influence" and predicted that "finally the Western States, multiplied in numbers and augmented in population will control the interests of the whole." Had this proposed amendment been made, the New England States with two other states in the Senate could have blocked the West from future statehood. Nathan Dane, after whom Dane County in this state is named, furnished the argument for this proposal by his elaborate tabulations and schedules. He pointed out that in the commercial states capital was invested in commerce, and in the slaveholding states in western lands. When "Kentucky, Ohio and Tennessee were raised up by this interest & admitted into the Union, then the balance was, materially, affected. The non-commercial states pressed the admission of Louisiana and turned the balance against the Northeast." "It clearly follows, he reasoned, "that if a bare majority in Congress can admit new States into the union (all interior ones as they must be) at pleasure, in these immense Western regions, the balance of the union as once fairly contemplated, must soon be destroyed."

But Jackson defeated the British at New Orleans. The Mississippi Valley remained within the Union, Louisiana's interests became affiliated with the commercial states in many ways, and New England people poured so rapidly into the West that New England found in the northern half of the Valley the basis for a new alliance and new power as disturbing to the slaveholding South as the Southern and Western connection had been to New England.

By the middle of the century the South was alarmed at

the Western power much in the way that New England had been. "I have very great fears," wrote Justice Campbell, later of the Federal Supreme Court, from Mobile to Calhoun in 1847, "that the existing territories of the United States will prove too much for our government. The wild and turbulent conduct of the members upon the Oregon question and their rapacity and greediness in all matters connected with the appropriation of the revenues induces great doubt of the propriety of introducing new States in the Union so fast as we do." Of the legislators from the Western States he said, "Their notions are freer, their impulses stronger, their wills less restrained. I do not wish to increase the number till the New States already admitted to the Union become civilized."

On the other hand, it must be clearly borne in mind that as the West grew in power of population and in numbers of new senators, it resented the conception that it was merely an emanation from a rival North and South; that it was the dependency of one or another of the Eastern sections; that it was to be so limited and controlled as to maintain an equilibrium in the Senate between North and South. It took the attitude of a section itself.

From the beginning the men who went west looked to the future when the people beyond the Alleghanies should rule the nation. Dr. Manasseh Cutler, the active promoter of the Ohio Company of Associates, which made the first considerable permanent settlement in the Old Northwest Territory, wrote in 1787 a *Description of Ohio*. Though himself the minister at Ipswich in the heart of that stronghold of conservatism, the "Essex Junto," he declared that on the Ohio would be "the seat of empire" for the whole Union. Within twenty years, he predicted, there would be more people on the western side of the Alleghany watershed than in the East, and he congratulated these people that "in order to begin right there will be no wrong habits to combat

and no inveterate systems to overturn—there will be no rubbish to remove before you lay the foundations." Evidently it did not take long to produce the Western point of view.

In the Senate in 1837 Benton, of Missouri, scorned the proposals of Calhoun regarding the disposition of the public domain, and boasted that after the census of 1840 had shown the weight of the West it would be so highly bid for that it would write its own bill. Perhaps the debate over the Compromise of 1850 brings out the self-assertive Western attitude in these years most clearly. Calhoun had argued that the equilibrium between North and South was being destroyed by the increase in free states made out of the Western territories. But Stephen A. Douglas, of Illinois, spoke for the West when he attacked the Southern statesman for the error of thinking of the West as property of the older sections. "What share had the South in the territories," he asked, "or the North, or any other geographical division unknown to the Constitution? I answer none—none at all." And Douglas calculated that if its right to self-determination were admitted, the West would form at least seventeen new free states, and that therefore the theory of equilibrium was a hopeless one.

It was not only the slavery struggle that revealed the Eastern conception of the West as merely the field of contest for power between the rival Atlantic sections, and the West's counter assertion of its own substantive rights. The same thing was shown in many different fields. For example rival Eastern cities and states, the centers of power in their respective sections, engaged in contests for the commercial control of the Mississippi Valley by transportation lines. The contests between rival European powers for the control of the Bagdad railway, the thrust of Germany toward the rich hinterlands made up of the Balkans and India, and the project of *Central Europe* in the history of the World War, have a resemblance to these American sectional contests for

the still more valuable hinterland of the Mississippi Valley. American sections did not go to war over their trade and transportation interests. Nevertheless they recognized that there were such interests. A Southern writer in *DeBow's Review* in 1847 declared:

"A contest has been going on between the North and South not limited to slavery or no slavery—to abolition or no abolition, nor to the politics of either whigs or democrats as such, but a contest for the wealth and commerce of the great valley of the Mississippi—a contest tendered by our Northern brethren, whether the growing commerce of the great West shall be thrown upon New Orleans or given to the Atlantic cities."

Shortly after this, in 1851, the *Western Journal* of St. Louis published articles lamenting that "the Western States are subjected to the relation of Provinces of the East" and that New Orleans was giving way to New York as their commercial city. Since (so the argument ran) exports can never build up a commercial city, the mouth of the Mississippi must be so improved that imports would enter the Valley by way of New Orleans. "Then," said the writer, "a line of cities will arise on the banks of the Mississippi that will far eclipse those on the Atlantic coast."

The middle of the century saw an extension of this sectional contest for economic power derived from the growing West; but it was the railroad trunk lines rather than the canals that occupied the foreground. The goal became the ports of the Pacific. The Memphis convention of 1845 and the Chicago convention of 1847 illustrate how interior cities were now repeating the rivalry for western trade which had earlier been seen on the Atlantic coast. The contests between New Orleans, Memphis, St. Louis, and Chicago influenced the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and the later strategy of the struggle for position between the Pacific railroads.

Throughout our history, then, there has been this sec-

tionalism of West and East, and this Eastern conception of the West as recruiting ground merely for the rival Atlantic coast sections. Nation-wide parties have had their eastern and western wings, often differing radically, and yet able by party loyalty and by adjustments and sacrifices to hold together. Such a struggle as the slavery contest can only be understood by bearing in mind that it was not merely a contest of North against South, but that its form and its causes were fundamentally shaped by the dynamic factor of expanding sections, of a West to be won.

This migratory sectionalism has not always been obvious, but it was none the less real and important. Year after year new Wests had been formed. Wildernesses equal in area to the greater European nations had been turned into farms in single decades.

But now the era of the frontier advance has ended. The vast public domain, so far as it is suited to agriculture, is taken up. The competent experts of the Department of Agriculture now tell us that "the nation reached and passed the apogee of agricultural land supply in proportion to population about 1890, and that we have entered a period which will necessarily be marked by a continually increasing scarcity of land." The price of lands has risen as the supply of free lands declined. Iowa farm lands mounted from an average of thirty dollars per acre in 1890 to over two hundred dollars in 1920.

Shortly after 1890 men began to speak less confidently of the inexhaustible forest supply. The reclamation act early in the twentieth century began a new era in governmental conservation and governmental economic activity. The Conservation Congress met in 1908, three centuries after the Jamestown settlers sank their axes into the edge of the American forest. The purpose of the congress was to consider the menace of forest exhaustion, the waste of soil fertility and of mineral resources, the reclamation of the

deserts, the drainage of the swamps. Now we are told by high authority that we shall feel the pinch of timber shortage in less than fifteen years. The free lands are no longer free; the boundless resources are no longer boundless. Already the urban population exceeds the rural population of the United States.

But this does not mean that the Eastern industrial type of urban life will necessarily spread across the whole nation, for food must come from somewhere, and the same expert authorities that predict that within about fifty years the United States itself will be unable to feed its population by its home supply, also conclude that the deficient food supply will not be available from outside the nation, because the same phenomenon of the encroachment of population upon food is in evidence throughout the world. Already Europe as a whole depends upon importation for its food supply. Its large population in proportion to its area and resources cannot be made the basis for estimates of what is possible in the United States, for Europe's large population was made possible by these imports from the United States as well as from other nations.

If the prediction be true, or if anything like it be true, then there must remain in the United States large rural farming interests and sections. The natural advantages of certain regions for farming, or for forestry, or for pasturage will arrest the tendency of the Eastern industrial type of society to flow across the continent and thus to produce a consolidated, homogeneous nation free from sections. At the same time that the nation settles down to the conditions of an occupied land, there will be emphasized the sectional differences arising from unlike geographic regions.

To President Coolidge, as a speech of his in November last shows, the prospect is of a nation importing its supplies of food and resources, facing "the problem of maintaining a prosperous, self-reliant, confident agriculture in a country

preponderantly commercial and industrial." Whether our destiny is to become a nation in which agriculture is subordinate, or one in which it is an equal partner with urban industrial interests, it seems clear that there will be sectional expression of the differences between these interests; for in certain geographic provinces agriculture will be entirely subordinate to manufacture, as in others such industry will be insignificant as compared with farming.

Unlike such countries as France and Germany, the United States has the problem of the clash of economic interests closely associated with regional geography on a huge scale. Over areas equal to all France or to all Germany, either the agricultural or the manufacturing types are here in decided ascendancy. Economic interests are sectionalized. The sections occupied by a rural population are of course far inferior in numbers of voters to the sections of urban industrial life. The map is deceptive in this respect, for Greater New York City, which would be a point on the map, has almost as many people as live in all the vast spaces of the Mountain and Pacific States. The population of the New England States and the Middle States of the North Atlantic division is over thirty millions, while the population of Wisconsin, Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, Washington, and Oregon is less than ten millions. On the map these states take an imposing space, but owing to physical geography a large portion will always remain sparsely settled. Nevertheless New England and the Middle States together have only eighteen senators, while the states of the section which I have just named have also eighteen senators. New York State alone has a larger population than this northwestern zone of states; but this wealthy and populous state has only two senators as against the eighteen senators of the other region.

On a map constructed so as to give to each state a space proportioned to its population, or to its income tax, instead

of to its dimensions in square miles, the western lands would shrink in their map space in a startling fashion. But in the Senate is exhibited the outcome of the tendencies which statesmen like Gouverneur Morris saw so clearly, namely, the great power of the newer states by their equal representation in the Senate and their ability to take property by taxation from the wealthier section and to distribute it according to numbers, or even according to deficiencies, throughout the Union as a unit. Obviously there is here the certainty of a sectional clash of interests, not unlike those which led to Calhoun's South Carolina Exposition.

Sectionalism will hereafter be shaped by such new forces. We have become a nation comparable to all Europe in area, with settled geographic provinces which equal great European nations. We are in this sense an empire, a federation of sections, a union of potential nations. It is well to look at the result of our leap to power since the ending of the frontier in order to appreciate our problems arising from size and varied sections.

We raise three-fourths of the world's corn, over a third of its swine, over half its cotton, and over one-fifth its wheat. Out of the virgin wilderness we have built such industrial power that we now produce two-thirds of the pig-iron of the world, over twice the steel tonnage of England, Germany, and France combined. We mine nearly half the world's coal. We have fully half the gold coin and bullion of the world, and in 1920 our national wealth exceeded the combined wealth of the United Kingdom, France, and Germany. In the World War President Wilson gave the word that sent two million Americans across the seas to turn the scale in that Titanic conflict. We are forced to think of ourselves continentally and to compare ourselves with all Europe. Why, with so vast a territory, with so many geographic provinces, equal in area, in natural resources, and in natural variety to the lands of the great nations of Europe, did we

not become another Europe? What tendencies have we developed that resembled those of Europe in the course of our history? Are there tendencies toward the transformation of our great sections into types similar to European nations?

It was evident at the outset of a study of the frontier movement that the American people were not passing into a monotonously uniform space. Rather, even in the colonial period, they were entering successive different geographic provinces; they were pouring their plastic pioneer life into geographic moulds. They would modify these moulds, they would have progressive revelations of the capacities of the geographic provinces which they won and settled and developed; but even the task of dealing constructively with the different regions would work its effects upon their traits.

Not a uniform surface, but a kind of checkerboard of differing environments, lay before them in their settlement. There would be the interplay of the migrating stocks and the new geographic provinces. The outcome would be a combination of the two factors, land and people, the creation of differing societies in the different sections. European nations were discovered, conquered, colonized, and developed so far back in history that the process of nation-making is obscure. Not so with section-making in the United States. The process has gone on almost under our own observation. But by the bondage to the modern map, as John Fiske put it, much American history has been obscured. Our constitutional forms, in contrast with the realities, provide for a federation of states. Our historians have dealt chiefly with local history, state history, national history, and but little with sectional history. Our students of government have been more aware of the legal relations of states and nation than with the actual groupings of states into sections, and with the actions of these sections beneath the political surface. State sovereignty, for example, has in fact never

been a vital issue except when a whole section stood behind the challenging state. This is what gave the protest reality.

One of the most interesting features of recent geographical studies is the emphasis placed upon regional geography and human geography. Europe has given more attention to such studies in human geography than has the United States. Perhaps this is because European nations have been forced to consider the geographical aspects of the self-determination of nations and the rearrangement of the map by the treaty which seemed to close the World War. Perhaps in the hard realities of that war the military staffs and the scientists who had to deal with the problem of supplies of food and of raw material were compelled to give attention to the subject. But even before and after this war, the increasing pressure of population upon the means of life compelled in Europe the study of the natural regions, their resources and peoples, and their relations to each other. Now the conditions which I have been attempting to make clear in the United States are forcing us to face the same problem. We, like European nations, are approaching a saturation of population.

That sectionalism which is based on geographical regions has been in evidence from the early colonial period, but it has been obscured and modified by the influence of the unoccupied West. The states have been declining and are likely to continue to diminish in importance in our politics; but the groups of states called sections are likely to become more significant as the state declines. A study of votes in the federal House and Senate from the beginning of our national history reveals the fact that party voting has more often broken down than maintained itself on fundamental issues; that when these votes are mapped or tabulated by the congressional districts or states from which those who cast them came, instead of by alphabetical arrangement, a persistent sectional pattern emerges.

There has been in the earlier periods the sharp clash between New England and the South, with the Middle States divided and unstable, constituting a buffer zone and often holding the balance of power. Then as population spread westward the greater parties were composed of sectional wings—normally in the Republican party there came to be a fairly solid conservative New England, a mixed and uncertain Middle Region, and a more radical North Central wing, ready in the shaping of legislation to join the Democrats in a kind of sectional bloc (even before the days of the bloc) to oppose the conservative and dominant Eastern wing. As time went on, the East North Central States came into closer connection with the Eastern wing, and in the West North Central lay the areas of radical dissent and of third-party movements. Legislation was determined less by party than by sectional voting. Bills were shaped for final passage by compromises between wings or by alliances between sections. The maps of presidential elections showing majorities by counties look like maps of North against South; but there was always a concealed East and West which temporarily laid aside their differences.

I think it not too much to say that in party conventions as well as Congress the outcome of deliberations bears a striking resemblance to treaties between sections, suggestive of treaties between European nations in diplomatic congresses. But over an area equal to all Europe we found it possible to legislate, and we tempered asperities and avoided wars by a process of sectional give-and-take. Whether we shall continue to preserve our national, our inter-sectional, party organization in the sharper sectional conflicts of interest that are likely to accompany the settling down of population, the completer revelation of the influence of physical geography, remains to be seen.

As an illustration of the newer forms of sectionalism, take the movement for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence deep

waterway. Middle Western leaders are arguing that there is "in the heart of the continent a large area beyond the radius of logical rail haul for the movement of bulk commodities to either seacoast." "Nature," runs the argument, "which has indicated the extent of the area which sends its surplus to the Atlantic seaboard and to the Gulf and to the Pacific ports, has provided the American continent with one potential seacoast not yet utilized. Upon the map of economic divides indicated by geography—the Atlantic seaboard, the Gulf territory, and the Pacific slope—there is, as it were, an economic desert a thousand miles east and west, five hundred miles north and south beyond the radius of logical rail haul to either coast." The desire to give an outlet to what is called this "landlocked commerce to the coast," leads to the demand for "a fourth economic divide based upon the Great Lakes as linked with the ocean, giving to the coast of the Great Lakes access to marine commerce" and permitting the erection of each rail system upon the sea base.[1]

When ex-Senator Townsend of Michigan was running for reëlection a Detroit daily reported: "The East is opposed to him because of his leadership in the waterways movement, but the entire West from Ohio to Idaho is looking hopefully and earnestly to Michigan to give him the largest majority he has ever received. The east and the west will be 'listening in' election night—the east hoping for a reduced Townsend vote, the west hoping fervently that his vote will be a knock-out blow to the eastern opposition to the St. Lawrence waterway."

I quote this to take the opportunity to point out that sweeping statements like these exaggerate the sectional feeling. As a matter of fact, of course, very few Eastern voters

[1] *The Sea Base: Relation of Marine to National Transportation System and of Lakes to Ocean Route to Continental Traffic*, published by Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Tidewater Association (Duluth, Minn., 1923). For an argument in favor of the New York route, see John B. Baldwin, *Our Dardanelles* (Honolulu, 1924).

knew much about Townsend, and, east and west, most of the radio fans were listening in to the vaudeville or the football game or the real prize fight.

But while Duluth writers press the importance of what they call this "frustrated seaway," New York writers protest that the outlet should be through an enlarged Erie Canal if there is to be such a water route at all, and it is argued that the projected St. Lawrence route would be "Our Dardanelles," liable to be closed against the West by Canadian or British government whenever disagreements invited this mode of coercion. In New England meantime there are fears that Boston would be injured as a port, besides the loss of her advantages by sea-borne commerce to the Pacific coast. A few years ago Mayor Curley of Boston indignantly declared that such a waterway "would obliterate New England absolutely."

I read the other day editorials in the *Chicago Tribune* which made the decision of the Supreme Court against the claim of the sanitary district to divert water from Lake Michigan without the permission of the Secretary of War the occasion for this language: "It is time for Chicago, Illinois, and the entire Mississippi Valley to rise in revolt against a tyranny which now threatens its very existence. . . . This is neither a conquered country nor a colony but an integral part of a nation, and as such entitled to the same consideration afforded to New England and New York." The editorial goes on to demand action to prevent the houses of Congress from organizing, etc. In another editorial of that issue, under the caption "The West is West, but the East is London," it is said: "It is natural that the East should turn to London for London policy is Atlantic policy," and the editor speaks of "London and its provinces in Montreal, Boston, New York and Washington."

No doubt this language is not to be taken with entire seriousness, but it is vigorous enough. It proposes revolt,

and paralysis of government; and it, in effect, reads a rather substantial chunk of America out of the Union. Allowing for New England's restraint in speech, mildly similar utterances can be found in the press of that section whenever its interests seem threatened by West or South.[2] When Senator John Taylor, of Virginia, informed Jefferson that the Northeast felt that union with the South was doomed to fail, that philosophic statesman replied in words that are worthy of extended quotation as illustrating both a tolerant spirit and an amusing impression of New England:

"It is true that we are completely under the saddle of Massachusetts and Connecticut and that they ride us very hard, cruelly insulting our feelings, as well as exhausting our strength and substance. Their natural friends, the three other eastern states, join them from a sort of family pride, and they have the art to divide certain other parts of the Union so as to make use of them to govern the whole." But, "seeing," said Jefferson, "that an association of men who will not quarrel with one another is a thing which never existed . . . seeing we must have somebody to quarrel with, I had rather keep our New England associates for that purpose than to see our bickerings transferred to others. They are circumscribed within such narrow bounds, and their population is so full, that their numbers will ever be in the minority, and they are marked, like the Jews, with such perversity of character, as to constitute from that circumstance the natural division of our parties." It will be observed that although he does not extol New England he does not read her out of the Union. The significant fact is that sectional self-consciousness and sensitiveness is likely to be increased as time goes on and crystallized sections feel the full influence of their geographic peculiarities, their special interests, and their developed ideals, in a closed and static nation.

[2] I have illustrated this subject in an article called "Sections and Nation," in the *Yale Review*, October, 1922.

There is a sense in which sectionalism is inevitable and desirable. There is and always has been a sectional geography in America based fundamentally upon geographic regions. There is a geography of political habit—a geography of opinion, of material interests, of racial stocks, of physical fitness, of social traits, of literature, of the distribution of men of ability, even of religious denominations. Professor Josiah Royce defined a "province" or section, in the sense in which I am using the word, as "any one part of a national domain which is geographically and socially sufficiently unified to have a true consciousness of its own ideals and customs and to possess a sense of its distinction from other parts of the country." It was the opinion of this eminent philosopher that the world needs now more than ever before the vigorous development of a highly organized provincial life to serve as a check upon mob psychology on a national scale, and to furnish that variety which is essential to vital growth and originality. With this I agree. But I wish also to urge here, as I have elsewhere, that there is always the danger that the province or section shall think of itself naively as the nation, that New England shall think that America is merely New England writ large, or the Middle West shall think that America is really the Middle West writ large, and then proceed to denounce the sections that do not perceive the accuracy of this view as wicked or ignorant and un-American. This kind of nationalism is a sectional mirage, but it is common, and has been common to all the sections in their unconscious attitude if not in clear expression. It involves the assumption of a superiority of culture, of *Kultur*, to which good morals require that the nation as a whole must yield.

We must frankly face the fact that in this vast and heterogeneous nation, this sister of all Europe, regional geography is a fundamental fact; that the American peace

has been achieved by restraining sectional selfishness and assertiveness and by coming to agreements rather than to reciprocal denunciation or to blows.

In the past we have held our sections together partly because while the undeveloped West was open there was a safety valve, a region for hopeful restoration; partly because there were national political parties, calling out national party allegiance and loyalty over all sections and at the same time yielding somewhat under stress to sectional demands. Party was like an elastic band.

But there would often have been serious danger, such as showed itself when parties became definitely sectionalized just before the Civil War, had it not been the fact that popular party majorities over most of the sections are much closer than is usually supposed. The party held its tenure of power by a narrow margin and must use its power temperately or risk defeat. It must conciliate sectional differences within itself.

Not only the narrowness of normal party majorities, county by county over the nation, but also the existence within each of the large sections of smaller sections or regions which did not agree with the views of their section as a whole, constituted a check both upon party despotism and upon sectional arrogance and exploitation of other sections.

In every state of the Union there are geographic regions, chiefly, but not exclusively, those determined by the ancient forces of geology, which divide the state into the lesser sections. These subsections within the states often cross state lines and connect with like areas in neighboring states and even in different sections of the larger type. Many states have now been made the subject of monographic studies of their internal sections shown in party politics, in economic interests, in social types, in cultural matters such as education, literature, and religion. I have prepared such maps of the United States for the year 1850. For example, the map

by counties showing the distribution of white illiteracy so closely resembles the map of the physiographic regions that the one might almost be taken for the other. Much the same is true for the map of farm values by counties. I have also mapped the Whig and Democratic counties in the presidential elections from 1836 to 1852 and combined them in a map, which shows that certain regions, certain groups of counties, were almost always Whig and others normally Democratic through all these years. Then I have had the photographer superimpose these maps one upon another. As a result it is shown that the rough, the poorer lands, the illiterate counties were for the most part the Democratic counties; while the fertile basins—like the richer wheat areas of the Old Northwest, the limestone islands about Lexington, Kentucky, and Nashville, Tennessee, the Black Belt of the Gulf States, the center of the cotton and slavery interests, the abode of the wealthy and educated great slaveholding planters—were Whig. The Whigs tended to be strong in the areas of the greater rivers and commercial centers and routes, and in the counties with the better record in the matter of illiteracy.

Now I am not saying that Democracy and illiteracy and poor soils are necessarily connected. One of the interesting results of the study is to show that there were exceptions that prevent any such exclusively physical explanations. In North Carolina, for example, very notable Whig areas were in the most illiterate, rough, mountainous counties of that state, where the poor whites were antagonistic to the wealthy slaveholding Democratic planters of the eastern counties. Certain regions, like western New York and the Western Reserve of Ohio, show not so much the influence of physical geography as of the fact that they were colonized by New Englanders and carried on the interest in vested rights which distinguished the Puritan stock.

In short, the studies show that generalizations which

make physical geography or economic interests alone the compelling explanation of political groupings are mistaken. There are also the factors of ideals and psychology, the inherited intellectual habits, derived from the stock from which the voters sprang. Sometimes these ideals carry the voters into lines that contradict their economic interests. But as a rule there has been such a connection of the stock, the geographic conditions, the economic interests, and the conceptions of right and wrong, that all have played upon each other to the same end.

Next I wish to emphasize the fact that these regional subdivisions are persistent. Often they remain politically the same for several generations. Probably the mass of voters inherit their party and their political ideas. Habit rather than reasoning is the fundamental factor in determining political affiliation of the mass of voters, and there is a geography, a habitat, of political habit.

There is the same geography of culture, though I am not able in the time that remains to develop this. For example, in a recent map of short-story areas (of what the author calls local color areas) almost exactly the same regions are shown as appear on the maps which I have mentioned.

There is, then, a sectionalism of the regions within the larger divisions, a sectionalism of minority areas, sometimes protesting against the policies of the larger section in which they lie and finding more in common with similar regions outside of this section. Herein lies a limitation upon the larger section in case it attempts a drastic and subversive policy toward other sections. As Professor Holcombe has pointed out, in this kind of nation, in this vast congeries of sections, voters cannot hope to have a choice between parties any one of which will stand for all the measures which they oppose. The most they can reasonably hope for, he thinks, "is the formation of a party, resting upon a combination of sectional interests which are capable of coop-

eration in national politics without too much jealousy and friction, and including that particular interest with which they are themselves most closely associated. No sectional interest is strong enough, alone and unaided, to control the federal government, and no major party can be formed with a fair prospect of domination in national politics which does not contain more or less incongruous elements."

With this I agree, and indeed have long been on record to this effect. It emphasizes the need for tolerance, for cooperation, for mutual sacrifices by the leaders of the various sections. Statesmanship in this nation consists not only in representing the special interests of the leader's own section, but in finding a formula that will bring the different regions together in a common policy. The greatest statesmen have always had this goal before them. If there were time I should like to quote the striking confirmation of this in writings of even such men as John Quincy Adams, Van Buren, and Calhoun, who are ordinarily thought of as rather definitely sectional. Each formulated plans for concessions to the various sections whereby a national pattern could emerge.

The significance of the section in American history is that it is the faint image of a European nation and that we need to reëxamine our history in the light of this fact. Our politics and our society have been shaped by sectional complexity and interplay not unlike what goes on between European nations. The greater sections are the result of the joint influence of the geologists' physiographic provinces and the colonizing stocks that entered them. The result is found in popular speech in which New England, the Middle States, the South, the Middle West, etc., are as common names as Massachusetts or Wisconsin. The Census divisions are more definite and official designations. Of course, the boundary lines are not definite and fixed. Neither are those of European nations. These larger sections have taken

their characteristic and peculiar attitudes in American civilization in general.

We have furnished to Europe the example of a continental federation of sections over an area equal to Europe itself, and by substituting discussion and concession and compromised legislation for force, we have shown the possibility of international political parties, international legislative bodies, and international peace. Our party system and our variety in regional geography have helped to preserve the American peace. By having our combination of sections represented in a national legislative body, by possessing what may be called a League of Sections, comparable to a League of Nations, if it included political parties and a legislative body, we have enabled these minority sections to defend their interests and yet avoid the use of force.

The thing to be avoided, if the lessons of history are followed, is the insistence upon the particular interests and ideals of the section in which we live, without sympathetic comprehension of the ideals, the interests, and the rights of other sections. We must shape our national action to the fact of a vast and varied Union of unlike sections.